



# The Basis for Christian Apologetics

Patrick Collins, MA

Director of Ratio Christi UAHuntsville



# Tonight's Goals

- Overview of Scriptural Basis for Apologetics
- Purpose and Limits of Apologetics



# Defining “Apologetics”

- Apologetics comes from the Greek word “apologia.”
- It means “an answer” or “a reasoned out defense.”
- “Apologia” is found a few times in the NT.
- Apologetics is seen throughout the NT
- It is a branch of Christian theology which “seeks to provide a rational justification for the truth claims of the Christian faith. It is primarily a theological discipline, though it has practical applications.”



## “Apologia” in the NT

- Acts 22:1; 25:16 giving an ‘answer’ or ‘defense’ in court
- 1 Cor. 9:3 Paul’s “answer” in defense of his apostleship
- 2 Cor. 7:11 Showing outward evidence
- Phil 1:7,17 giving a “defense” of the gospel
- 2 Tim. 4:16 giving an answer
- 1 Peter 3:15 “always *be* ready to *give* a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you”



# Types of Apologetics

- Positive: Affirming your position
- Negative: Showing flaws in other views
- Religion-specified
  - Christian, Muslim, Mormon, etc
- Different Approaches:
  - Presuppositional
  - Evidential
  - Cumulative Case, etc



# Purpose of Christian Apologetics

- Spiritual Growth & Discernment
- Preserve the Church
  - Identify False Teachers
  - Identify False Teachings
  - Correct False Teachings
  - Unify the Church
- Grow the Church (Evangelism)





# Spiritual Growth & Discernment

- 2 Tim 3:16-17

All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and ***is*** profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.



# Spiritual Growth & Discernment

- Hebrews 5:12-14

For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need *someone* to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes *only* of milk *is* unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, *that is*, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to **discern both good and evil**.





# Spiritual Growth & Discernment

- Acts 20:29-31

For I know this, that **after my departure savage wolves will come in among you**, not sparing the flock. **Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.** Therefore **watch**, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.



# Spiritual Growth & Discernment

- The following verses will show:
  - The disciples had a firm foundation for their beliefs
  - They knew why they believed
  - They gave evidences for their beliefs
  - They encouraged others to know why Christianity is true



# Foundations for Belief

- John 20:30-31

And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book but **these are written that you may believe** that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.



# Foundations for Belief

- Luke 1:1-4

Inasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which have been fulfilled among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus, that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed.



# Foundations for Belief

- John 20:24-29 Doubting Thomas, who Jesus appeared to and showed him His injuries.
- Luke 7:18-23 Jesus is asked by John the Baptist's disciples if Jesus is the Messiah, in response Jesus gave them evidences to report back to John
- 2 Peter 1:16 Peter declares that he and others were eyewitnesses of Jesus Christ's ministry.





# Preserve the Church

- Identify False Teachers
- Identify False Teachings
- Correct False Teachings
- Unify the Church



# Identify False Teachers

- Jude 1:4

For **certain men have crept in unnoticed**, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, **who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.**

- Ephesians 5:11

And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather **expose them.**



# Identify False Teachers

- Paul names numerous false teachers by name
  - 2 Timothy 1:15: Phygellus and Hermogenes
  - 2 Timothy 2:17: Mymenaeus and Philetus
  - 2 Timothy 3:8: Jannes and Jambress
  - 2 Timothy 4:10: Demas
  - 2 Timothy 4:14: Alexander the coppersmith
- Jesus named false teachers (Matt 23 & Luke 11)
- John named Diotrephes (3 John 1:9)



# Identify False Teachers

- 1 Timothy 6:3-5

**If anyone teaches otherwise** and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but is **obsessed with disputes and arguments over words**, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, **useless wranglings** of men of corrupt minds and **destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain**. From such withdraw yourself.



# Correct False Teachings

- 2 Corinthians 10:4-6

For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, **casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God**, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.





# Correct False Teachings

- 2 Timothy 4:2-4

Preach the word! Be ready in season *and* out of season. **Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.** For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, *because* they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; **and they will turn *their* ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.**



# Unify the Church

- 1 Corinthians 1:10-11

Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and ***that* there be no divisions among you, but *that* you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.** For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's *household*, that **there are contentions among you.**



# Grow the Church

- Great Commission: Matthew 28:18-20

“make disciples of all the nations... teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you...”

- God’s Ambassadors: 2 Corinthians 5:10-21

“[God] has given us the ministry of reconciliation..., **we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us...**”

- Pre-Evangelism: 1 Cor. 3:5-6 & 1 Peter 3:1

“I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase.”  
and “they...may be won by the conduct of their



# Examples of Paul's Apologetics

- Acts 17:10-15 Paul in Berea, preached in the synagogue, where Jews, “received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily *to find out* whether these things were so. Therefore many of them believed”
- Acts 17:16-34 Paul used creation, natural theology, the Epicurean and Stoic’s own poetry, philosophy, and reason to convince the Athenians the truths of Christianity.
- Acts 19:8-10 Paul in Ephesus, went into synagogues for three months, “reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God.” He then moved his ministry to the school of Tyrannus, where he taught for 2 more years to both Jews and Greeks.



# Defending Apologetics

- Common Objections
- Apologetics as a Discipline
- Limits of Apologetics





# Common Objections

1) Jesus and Paul actually endorsed "blind faith."

- Examples:

- Luke 7:2-10 Centurion and healing of his child
- Matthew 15:21-28 Gentile woman's daughter
- John 20:29 Jesus said to him, "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed *are* those who have not seen and *yet* have believed."



# Common Objections

## Response to Blind Faith:

- While faith in Christ can be “blind faith” at first, there is an expectation of building on that faith.
- Paul’s examples shows many believed based on reasons and evidence.
- 2 Peter 1:5-9 “...giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.”



# Common Objections

## 2) Christians shouldn't argue

- Examples:
  - 2 Timothy 2:14 Remind *them* of these things, charging *them* before the Lord not to strive about words to no profit, to the ruin of the hearers.
  - 2 Timothy 2:23-24 But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife. And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel



# Common Objections

## Response to Arguing

- Arguing can be done in a right or wrong way.
- Christians should avoid arguing the wrong way, ie. Raising voices, hurling insults, vain disputes, etc
- 2 Timothy 2:25-26 "with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition"
- 2 Timothy 4:2. Timothy to "preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction"
- 1 Peter 3:15 Give reasons with self control and respect



# Common Objections

## 3) Christians shouldn't be persuasive

- Example:
  - 1 Corinthians 2:4-5 "my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power"
- Response: Paul isn't giving instructions, he's describing how he approached the Corinthians.





## Common Objections

- 4) Christians should only preach the Gospel
- Response: Refer to many of the above examples where Paul, Luke, etc used more than the Gospel, ie. Reasoning, evidences, et al.



# Common Objections

## 5) Christians shouldn't judge others

- Example:
  - Matthew 7:1-6 “Judge not, that you be not judged.”
- Response:
  - Matthew 7 is talking about not being a hypocrite (explained in verse 5)
  - All people exercise discernment, which involves judging people, situations, things, etc.



# Common Objections

## 6) Christians shouldn't be involved with philosophy

- Examples:
  - Colossians 2:8 Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit...
- Response:
  - Philosophy can be misused, but nowhere in Scripture are Christians told to avoid it.



# Common Objections

7) An apologist is not a Biblical office of the church

- Example:

- Ephesians 4:12 And He Himself gave some *to be* apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers

- Response:

- While there is no specific office titled Apologist, anyone who teaches, preaches, or tries to do evangelism is doing some form of apologetics.



# Apologetics as a Discipline

- Apologetics as a discipline attempts to show what the most reasonable or best explanation is.
- Apologetics does have limits, which are covered in part by the philosophies of science, history, and religion.
- Each individual has his own barriers to belief, meaning one can't twist someone's arm, so to speak, to cause them to believe.
- Barriers to belief can include ethos, pathos, and logos; or in other words, the emotion, the will, and the mind.





# Limits of Apologetics

- Intellectual
  - Philosophical
  - Presuppositional
  - Evidential
  - Scriptural
  - Historical
- Emotional
- Will



# Intellectual Limits of Apologetics

- Philosophy:
  - A discipline that investigates other disciplines
    - Ex: Philosophy of Religion; Philosophy of Science
    - Ie: “What is science?” is a philosophical question
  - Must follow laws of logic
  - Doesn’t “prove,” but shows what is more reasonable
  - Three main types of “arguments”
    - Deductive: Premises and conclusion
    - Inductive: Patterns form principles of the world
    - Abductive: Explaining an effect by possible causes



# Intellectual Limits of Apologetics

- Philosophy Examples:
  - Basic Deductive Argument:
    - All metal conducts electricity
    - This wire is a metal
    - This metal wire conducts electricity
  - Cosmological Argument
    - Everything that has a beginning has a cause
    - The Universe has a beginning
    - The Universe has a cause



# Intellectual Limits of Apologetics

- Presuppositional
  - Presuppositions are difficult for some to overcome. They are so ingrained in their perception of the world that they hinder a person from thinking outside a box.
  - Those who cannot overcome their presuppositions are harder to communicate with and convince.
  - Even if someone can identify their own presuppositions, they can have difficulty considering other points of view.



# Intellectual Limits of Apologetics

- Evidential
  - Evidences are limited by the data and presuppositions
  - Data is “just the facts” whereas most people learn data based on someone else’s interpretation of data.
  - Science is limited by what we can know empirically
  - Presuppositions prevent people from considering some types of evidence
    - Miracles are impossible under naturalistic presuppositions
    - Objective reality is dismissed by post-moderns and Buddhists





# Intellectual Limits of Apologetics

- Scriptural
  - Limited by hermeneutics
    - Understanding genre, original audience understanding, etc
    - Some sects over emphasize certain passages
    - Exegesis vs. Eisegesis
  - Limited by authority
    - Catholic Church's Tradition, Cult's gurus, etc
  - Ignorance of hermeneutics or Bible in general
  - Unclear passages (trying to be more detailed than it allows)



# Intellectual Limits of Apologetics

- Historical
  - Limits of available data
  - Interpretation of archaeological data
  - Trustworthiness of ancient historians
  - Fidelity of transmission of texts
  - Limits of Historical Methodologies.
  - Textual Criticism range (conservative, mod, liberal)



# Emotional Limits of Apologetics

- Tragic events
  - “Why did God let this happen?”
  - Being mad at God; giving Him the “silent treatment”
- Abusive Church Environments
  - Legalism or seemingly unnecessary restrictions
  - Very judgmental churches
  - Unbalanced focus on “favorite” issues
  - Focus on performance rather than heart
  - etc



# Emotional Limits of Apologetics

- Misguided view of God
- Idolatry
  - Not willing to surrender to God's call
  - Has other gods in modern forms (football, TV, etc)
- Bad experience around “Christians”
- Living for self; “worldliness”



# Limits of Apologetics: The Will

- Some people, even if they believe parts or all of the Gospel, may still not believe in Christ
- Many have said, “I just can’t make myself believe it.”





# Limits of Apologetics

- Ultimately, one cannot be “backed into a corner” to believe, no matter how good the evidence.
- Looking at the Gospels, many of the Pharisees who saw miracles didn’t believe.
- Looking at the resurrection, the Temple leadership intentionally covered the fact that Jesus resurrected.



# Limits of Apologetics

- Ultimately, the Holy Spirit saves people, not arguments.
- 1 Corinthians 2:13-15 shows that the Holy Spirit reveals spiritual things that the natural man (non-Christian) can't (or is not allowed to) understand.
- Romans 9:15-24 shows that God “’will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion.’ So then *it is* not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.”



# Limits of Apologetics

- Remember it's a spiritual battle
  - There are captives
  - The devil is still active today
  - There is power in prayer



# No More Blind Faith

Prerequisites for Apologetics



# Prerequisites for Apologetics

- Know Why You Believe What You Believe
- Discipleship
- Maturity





# Know Why You Believe

- 2 Timothy 2:15 Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.
- Colossians 2:6-8 As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, **rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith**, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.  
⁸ Beware lest anyone cheat you through vain philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.



# Discipleship

- 2 Timothy 2:2 And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, **commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.**
- Matthew 28:18-20 Go therefore and **make disciples** of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you**



# Maturity

- Colossians 4:5-6 "Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned, as it were, with salt, **so that you may know how you should respond** to each person."
- 2 Timothy 2:24-25 And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but **be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition**, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth,



- All scripture is quoted form the New King James version of the Bible